

## **Introduction - Issue 06: Winter 2003**

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The global justice and solidarity movement (and all its articulations) is increasingly posing the question of alternatives. In this issue of The Commoner we provide contributions on this issue. Several of these pieces (those of Massimo De Angelis, Olivier De Marcellus, Franco Barchiesi and Peter Waterman) were presented at a workshop on “Commons and Communities” during last European Social Forum in Florence, November 2002. Mariarosa Dalla Costa’s two papers are older, but still very much relevant to this debate. She also presented the themes of her papers at the workshop in Florence. Finally, John Holloway’s contribution is the only one in this list that was missing in Florence, but the question of dignity he poses is obviously central to any discourse on alternatives.

Despite the differences in emphasis, language or strategic priorities, a common theme among the contributions seems to be that, in a sense, the question of alternatives is not very difficult after all. To the enclosure of land, water, services, education, knowledge, we counterpoise different forms of commons. To the enforcement of competitive relations in every sphere of life and within and across places, we counterpoise the construction of local and trans-local communities based on inclusion, respect, horizontality and participation. To the indignity of consumerism and lack, scarcity and dependency, we counterpoise the dignity of plenty, autonomy, gift and conviviality. To the freedom of choice from a menu imposed on us by impersonal market forces and their engineers, we counterpoise the freedom to decide the menu itself: how and what we produce? what and how much to add to our production? and what and how much to subtract to it? Since we can exercise this freedom only collectively, we must learn to make decisions collectively, we must learn that democracy is not only voting but participating, and participating is not only giving an opinion but also doing and therefore accessing resources. If it so simple then, why do we make it so difficult?